

Ventilation Issues Persist in Unrenovated Wings of GSA Headquarters Building - GSA Office of Inspector General

Ventilation Issues Persist in Unrenovated Wings of GSA Headquarters Building

Summary

In December 2021, the Office of Inspector General (OIG) Office of Inspections initiated an inspection of indoor air quality (IAQ) in the unrenovated Wings 0 and 3 at the General Services Administration (GSA) Headquarters Building, at 1800 F Street Northwest, Washington D.C. We initiated this inspection after receiving information from GSA concerning ventilation and air quality in the unrenovated Wings 0 and 3 of the Headquarters Building.

Our objective was to assess the impact of building occupancy in Wings 0 and 3 of the Headquarters Building on IAQ, ventilation, filtration, and circulation test results. Early in our inspection, we determined that GSA's outdated and deteriorating ventilation systems and equipment in Wings 0 and 3 significantly impaired IAQ in these Wings, especially during the heating season. Additionally, we identified actions GSA has taken, is taking, or plans to take in implementing Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other guidance to mitigate risks in the unrenovated areas. Finally, as we discuss later, we found that GSA's mitigating actions do not completely abate the ventilation issues to ensure a safe work environment in the unrenovated areas.

On March 10, 2022, during the course of this inspection, we issued a Management Alert report, Inadequate Ventilation in GSA Headquarters Child Care Center, to bring GSA management's attention to the deficiencies in the agency's compliance with the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) standard for ventilation in the Child Care Center. Our report found that PBS leadership knew that it was not meeting the ASHRAE standards for ventilation in the Child Care Center. The lack of ventilation meant that PBS did not provide the occupants of the Child Care Center with fresh air when the outside air temperature reached 40° F or lower. Even when the Child Care Center received fresh air, the space lacked ventilation due to the absence of return vents needed for removing used air. Furthermore, a contractor found that a drop ceiling in the infant room essentially covered the supply vents. Following our management alert report, PBS National Capital Region (NCR) installed a new air handler unit (AHU) in May 2022.

Our inspection found that PBS leadership knew of significant deficiencies in the ventilation systems and equipment throughout the unrenovated Wings 0 and 3 of the Headquarters Building for years, but did not take sufficient action to address those deficiencies. During the Coronavirus19 (COVID-19) pandemic, GSA began to implement CDC recommended mitigation actions to reduce the risk of spreading SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19. However, these actions did not improve or address the larger and more significant ventilation issues in Wings 0 and 3.

Our report makes two recommendations to address the issues identified during the inspection. In response to our report, GSA management agreed with our recommendations. Management comments can be found in their entirety in Appendix 2.

REPORT:

[Ventilation Issues Persist in Unrenovated Wings of GSA Headquarters Building \(JE23-001\).pdf](#)